

**TOWN OF HAMILTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
AUGUST 3, 2015**

The Board of Selectmen met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 3, 2015 with Scott Maddern, Marc Johnson, Shawn Farrell, Bill Wilson (arrived at 8 p.m.) present. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Director of Planning and Inspections Patrick Reffett, HDC President Brian Stein, HDC and Planning Board member Rick Mitchell and ZBA Chair Bill Bowler also present.

Call to order

Scott Maddern called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and expressed condolences to the Trustey family.

Public Comment

Discussion ensued with Ed Howard, 10 Meyer Lane, about his interest in update on Town beach and he opined about importance of control of the public facility by the Town. Town officials noted that the topic is not ready for discussion and Board priority will determine when the matter will become an agenda item.

Chairman/Selectmen reports

Marc Johnson spoke to Myopia Hunt Club's plans to use a coffer dam to dredge a section of the Miles River to improve the efficiency of their golf course and polo field irrigation, and to eradicate invasive species along that same stretch of the river. Also the Conservation Commission has supplied written observations on Land Acquisition policy. Shawn Farrell provided an update on Planning Board's review of Canterbrook senior housing project including stormwater management and width of roadway, Made Pony project has been withdrawn without prejudice, comments will be provided on Land Acquisition Policy. Also, the Recreation Board's review of turf field project, CPC subcommittee review of Sagamore proposal and conservation restriction with multiple parties as well as CPA surcharge level (i.e., 2% to 3%), and appointments to the Open Space Committee by the Conservation Commission. Maddern reported on preparation for fall Town Meeting including mixed use by-law, League of Women Voters and Town's long term vision, and Wenham museum's military history day at Patton Homestead.

Town Manager's report

Town Manager Michael Lombardo described how October 3, 2015 date proposed for fall Town Meeting might be problematic for auditorium at High School so it could possibly be moved to Winthrop School or rescheduled to November 7. The 12 housing unit project on Asbury Street has received blessing from the Conservation Commission, and CPA application has been filed for \$550,000 for design and RFP for Town Hall renovation. Town officials evaluated Town beach at Chebacco Lake and MIIA has weighed in which can be reported in a memo and subsequent BOS agenda. Complaints have been received about roosters, Town by-law does not prevent keeping of roosters, so there could be a citizens' petition to amend by-law to prohibit or regulate. Investigation was also done on noise by-law and Police Chief Russell Stevens and Town Counsel Donna Brewer are reviewing since it is difficult to enforce and an amendment might be considered at Town Meeting. Lombardo wished DPW Director Bill Tyack well since he has been hospitalized.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Make recommendation to the Town Moderator to appoint John T. Kain to the **Finance and Advisory Committee** to a three year term.
- Appoint George Connolly to the Historic District Commission for a term expiring June 30, 2018.
- Accept Donation to H-W Recreation Revolving Fund for 2015 Two Town Patriotic Celebration – Fireworks -- \$500 – The Gourdeau Family
- **Approve Minutes:** July 20, 2015 – Regular Session

Maddern read items and entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Johnson so moved. Farrell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

AGENDA

- Patrick Reffett to discuss a mixed use zoning by-law amendment proposed by the Hamilton Development Corporation for inclusion in the Warrant for Special Town Meeting

Discussion ensued about mixed use zoning by-law amendment proposed by the Hamilton Development Corporation for inclusion in the Warrant for Special Town

Meeting to allow residential use in the upper stories of downtown buildings. Reffett noted that this is the essence of smart growth and zoning meetings as well as charrettes held in Town have supported the concept, it would make the downtown more vibrant, allow properties to be more viable, there is adequate parking, and location is near train station. Reffett noted that special permit process might be approach to use with amendment. The Planning Board is going to hold a public hearing on August 18th on the proposed amendment. Johnson and Farrell expressed support for proposal.

Brian Stein, HDC president introduced the design guidelines that HDC has developed to encourage a cohesive downtown in terms of architectural elements, materials, types of roofs and windows, contiguous sidewalks and lighting that would be suggested to property owners and developers. The design guidelines contain images of recommended examples and were used for the recently built Cumberland Farms building. Discussion ensued about how the design standards are straight forward, flexible and broad so they would not create a problem for developers. The intent of the design guidelines is to improve the design quality in Hamilton's business district, helping to attract customers to the area and encourage economic revitalization. The guidelines are posted on the Planning Board's web page.

- Department Reports – Patrick Reffett, Director to present the Board with an update on the Planning & Inspections Department

Reffett describes how Patton project is in final appeal process related to Conservation Commission, and has received approval from Health Agent and Planning Board. The Canterbrook senior housing project application is underway with peer review information to Planning Board on August 18th. The project proposal for Esdaile property was withdrawn without prejudice. Also mentioned was the ZBA project petition by Institute for Savings for property that is currently Hamilton Gardens which is to the south of the Historic District (the district sign needs to be relocated from three lots away). The site plan review is before ZBA and recommendations on the project will come from the Planning Board. A requirement for the proposed project is to illustrate how it would be less detrimental than the current use which will be done through peer review engineers hired by Town for \$12,000 as paid for by the applicant. Attorney General approval has been received for dimensioning of cell towers, GPOD map change, and senior housing two-unit clarification.

Reffett continues to work with HDC as it makes traction. He acknowledged the remarkable contribution that Community Projects Coordinator Rachel Meketon has

made to the Town and what a phenomenal loss her leaving to go to MIT for graduate school will be for Hamilton.

Also mentioned was proposal for privately developed cell tower project at 434 Asbury Street which has started the federal process and once it is addressed locally it would come before the Planning Board. An RFP document from the Town for cell towers is moving forward. There have been many applications coming into the Building Department regarding repairs from storm damage, and remodeling projects. The Town's fee structure may be low so this will be compared to similar regional communities and suggestions reviewed. A CPC funding application has been filed for CPA funding for design and engineering to renovate Town Hall. Conservation Agent Jim Hankin is working on draft Open Space plan which will be put on Town's website for review.

A proposal was received for RFP for zoning by-law revision from individual who wrote the handbook for land use planning who would work with working group of land use board representatives on matter. Part of this work would include at a minimum recodification and removing what is illegal in the by-law. The hope is to have this ready for review by annual Town Meeting. Steps taken to clean up the zoning by-law and make it more understandable will be communicated to the public.

- Discuss We are in it Together (long term guidance)

Johnson summarized charts he has developed using data from DOR, Assessors' records, and MAPC charts to analyze Hamilton and surrounding communities relative to population from 1970 to 2013 where there was a bump in early years for Essex County, marginal growth until 2000 and steady or declining growth in last 15 years across the county. There was a 600 person decline from 2000 to 2010 in Hamilton's population. Total school district enrollment information from HWRSD was reviewed where enrollment has dropped since 2000 from 2,200 to 1,864 in 2014 (pre-K through 12). Also each class size has dropped 20% in 14 years. More data is needed to analyze change in population by age.

Hamilton has many properties with one or more bedrooms in the \$350,000 to \$400,000 and \$650,000 range across its 2,800 properties. All the new houses in Town are not near this price range. Since 1999 the per capita income has risen from \$33,000 to \$60,000 but does not fairly reflect burden since older demographic does not have income stream growing at this rate. Also, the total asset value in Town (primarily residential property value) in 2006 was \$1.4 billion and it dropped due to recession and lack of appreciation

since late 1990s and early 2000s. The 2015 and 2016 values are expected to be higher than the trends. The per capita income analysis reveals that prospective resident making \$50,000 annually may have a hard time moving to Town.

Also evaluated was the number of properties sold and percentage of total where 160 transactions occurred in 2014 or 6% of Town. In 2013 there were 180 transactions, and in 2007 there were 80 transactions. Historically 3% of houses were sold in Hamilton in a given year. The average homeowner stays in Hamilton for 15.6 years. In the last two years more new people are moving into Town. Newer homes are generally much more expensive than historically (i.e., \$350,000 homes built in 1950s and 1960s) partly because land is more expensive. Very few new housing permits are received by Hamilton annually (15 in a decade with neighboring towns receiving as much as 5 times more).

Total Town spending by departments was \$7 million in 2008 and \$8.8 million eight years later. Total Town spending including for regional school districts resulted in a tax rate of \$14 in 2003 which dropped to \$12 and has gone up to as high as \$17. The single family average tax bill since 2010 is \$8,000 annually. The Town's tax rate is \$17.40 and average tax bill is flat. In 2000, 2001 and 2013 there was massive appreciation but also a large increase in total spending (school versus Town budget).

In regard to outstanding debt, Hamilton's operating budget back to 1991 had little debt, in 2000s debt occurred for public safety building, Miles River Middle School, HW Library, and debt is declining as it is paid off since 2007. Recapitalization occurred in 2011. The Town's debt service is not equal to one-tenth of 1% and is lower than other communities (Hamilton has an AAA bond rating). The Town's override history was in 1990, 1991, 2008, and 2009. Recent spending occurred on school for capital but not through override since 2010. For FY'13, 65% of total spending was on education. Compared to neighboring communities, police department spending as part of budget is in line, fire department spending is low, and general government spending is low (6%), spending is low for DPW and debt service. Wenham spends more budget funds than Hamilton in these categories.

According to DOR 2014 comparison report with cohort communities, Hamilton's population is in the middle, the tax bill is high, per capita income of \$60,000 is higher, road miles to be maintained are high, tax levy as percentage of budget is dependent upon residential property tax, state aid for Town is next to nothing, single family residential and open space is 95% compared to commercial/industrial areas, Hamilton's debt as percentage of budget is relatively low, also included is bond rating and Consumer Price Index (1990s spend due to inflation, overrides in 2002 for Town and Schools).

Discussion ensued about how BOS and Town manager would use data to solicit input on demands and spending for recreation, senior services, education, and housing. Relevant conversation will occur with FinCom, and analysis will be done on HWRSD master plan as part of a focus group effort to assess if public and officials believe Town is spending appropriately, guidance for planning ahead and how will services change. In addition, that average cost housing in Town does not turnover frequently and new housing is a lot more expensive, so this creates a problem to turn school enrollment around. Hamilton needs lower price point housing for residents in lower priced houses to move, which could mean pockets of denser housing (i.e., apartments) to open up activity for families to buy houses in Town at the lower end of cost structure. This evaluation process could include categorizing data sets and overlaying sales data (what price points are selling over assessed data) to guide Town spending moving forward. Data to be researched includes construction permits, and competition with good private schools in the area relative to declining school population. Draft information compiled by Johnson will be distributed to BOS for review.

- Set date of next Selectmen meeting

The next Selectmen's meetings will be with FinCom and a HW School Committee representative on Saturday, August 22, and with Board on August 24.

NEW BUSINESS

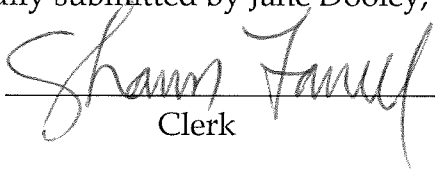
- Consideration of topics for discussion at future Selectmen's meetings

Discussion addressed Town beach (Lombardo will summarize findings in a memo), Patton Park flagpole, wheel work on Patton Park cannon that are out for repair, working session on We are in it Together, and schools' goals update.

Maddern entertained a motion to adjourn at 9:14 p.m. Wilson so moved. Johnson seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST:


Clerk